

# SERVICE TO THE BLIND & VISUALLY IMPAIRED



## SUMMER 2017 VISIONS NEWSLETTER

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### **Director's Comments by Gaye Mattke**

Summer is in full swing as evidenced by our 100 degree temperatures. I'm convinced this beats winter and blizzards in spite of the extreme heat! I hope this finds you all staying cool and enjoying summer festivities. I had the pleasure of joining the folks from the Oglala Sioux Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Program, Disability Rights of South Dakota (formerly South Dakota Advocacy Services), and Rehabilitation Services for a gathering in Kyle, SD on June 2<sup>nd</sup>. Thankfully the weather was much milder than what we've experienced in July since a cookout was part of the festivities. It was a memorable day and I felt fortunate to have the opportunity to meet people of all ages who attended the event. I also had the opportunity to "babysit" a puppy named Brownie who happened to be black and white.

We're planning an SBVI all staff meeting and training in August at the SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind. This gives us the opportunity to delve into topics that are relevant to vision loss and staff always benefit from sharing information and comradery.

I recently received word that Cole Uecker and Connie Sullivan were re-appointed to the Board of SBVI. In addition, Jill Kundtz was appointed to replace Julie Briggs and Tami Francis was appointed to replace Bruce Micheel. Julie and Bruce both served the maximum of two three-year terms with their final term expiring on June 30, 2017. Dr. Lynda O'Connor resigned her seat as she is relocating to Iowa to be closer to family. Dr. O'Connor's resignation creates a vacancy for a Board member who is blind or visually impaired. Please contact me if you or someone you know is interested in serving on the Board of SBVI.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the service of these members. Your commitment of time and willingness to provide advice to SBVI is sincerely appreciated.

### **South Dakota State University Rehabilitation Counseling Program**

The SDSU Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling program has just recently expanded to offer classes through video conference starting in the fall of 2017. Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired strives to hire certified rehabilitation counselors to work with people with significant disabilities. They are the only professional counselor educated and trained at the graduate level specifically to work with individuals with disabilities. Certified rehabilitation counselors must have a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling and pass the certification exam through the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification.

Hiring staff already qualified with this level of expertise can be a challenge, and we tend to hire people with a master's degree, but not necessarily in rehabilitation counseling, or a bachelor's degree in a human services related field. To support opportunities for a vocational rehabilitation counselor to become certified, the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) offers scholarships through various universities to cover tuition and fees for master's classes, and SDSU has been awarded one of the RSA grants. SDSU has had a master's in rehabilitation counseling program in Brookings since 2005, and then expanded to offer classes through their satellite office in Rapid City. Counselors living outside those communities had to find universities outside of South Dakota offering RSA scholarships that provided online courses to obtain their degrees. Now that SDSU has made their classes available through video conference, more VR counselors in South Dakota will be able to access those classes, obtain their master's degrees, and become certified rehabilitation counselors. SDSU's in-state online master's program is a win-win for South Dakota vocational rehabilitation, SDSU, and South Dakotans with disabilities.

### **Aging Gracefully Expo**

South Dakota State University Extension is collaborating with the Office of Attorney General to host the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Aging Gracefully Expo (AGE). This event will connect people with new ways of living fully throughout life and provide the audience with information on Consumer Protection and the South Dakota Alzheimer's Association. The Aging Gracefully Expo (AGE) will be held on September 23<sup>rd</sup> in Rapid City at the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center from 10:30 am – 3:30 pm and will be shared through webcast with additional communities in South Dakota. Rapid City's location will host two keynote presentations from Attorney General Marty Jackley and State Director for the Alzheimer's Association SD Chapter, Kathi Herreid. Plans are underway for the event to be viewed through webcast in Pierre, Winner, Salem, Sioux Falls, Pollock and Herreid. Information related to the AGE agenda in local communities is being developed, but it is anticipated that most locations will have local vendors present who will share information related to a graceful aging experience. If you're interested in participating, look for information through the local paper or radio stations and join the fun on September 23<sup>rd</sup>. The cost is free to all community members who wish to attend.

## **Medical Equipment Recycle & Reuse**

DakotaLink has partnered with the Department of Social Services to form the Medical Equipment Recycle and Reuse (MERR) program. This program is a resource for individuals to donate used equipment that no longer has a purpose. MERR sanitizes and refurbishes donated equipment to be re-distributed to South Dakota residents. Durable medical equipment (DME) is equipment that can withstand repeated use and is primarily used to serve a medical purpose. DME devices play an important role in helping individuals live independently. Donations can be dropped off at 3411 S. Center Ave. in Sioux Falls. If an item is too large to drop off, MERR will pick up any items in the Sioux Falls area. For more information, refer to the MERR [brochure](#) or call 605.271.5074 or 1.866.274.2594.

## **Public Listening Session**

An event was held in Kyle, S.D. in collaboration with Disability Rights South Dakota (SD Advocacy Services), the Division of Rehabilitation Services and the Pine Ridge Native American Vocational Rehabilitation Program on June 2<sup>nd</sup>. Over 70 community members attended with opportunities to visit with agency representatives who offered support and emphasized agency services. Lunch was provided and live interviews were broadcast on KILI radio with information about programs and services. Based on comments made by people attending the event, it is apparent that the SBVI and DRS Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors who cover this area of the state are well-liked by the professionals and community members.

## **Resources for Diabetics with Vision Loss**

A new website has recently opened especially for Blind Diabetics. It is called the Blind Independence Diabetes Group or BID Group. The purpose of the BID Group is to enable blind diabetics to improve their diabetes health, gain independence, and make new friends. The BID Group website provides free “living with diabetes and blindness” audio training materials from top medical and blindness professionals. It offers friendly nationwide peer support groups where blind diabetics, facing the same issues, can learn, laugh, and grow together. Check out the BID Group Newsletter for April 2017 and other BID Group news at [www.bid.northcoastmed.com](http://www.bid.northcoastmed.com).

The BID Group is sponsored by Medicare Bid Winner Advanced Diabetes Supply which also provides the Prodigy Voice glucose meter to Medicare, private health plan, and cash pay customers. They sell Prodigy test strips for just \$6.87 per box of 50 for people without insurance. If you want more information about the BID Group call Jerry at 980-253-0949 or to order supplies call Bob at 760-579-7320.

## **Assistive Technology News by JoMarie Laughlin, SDRC AT Instructor**

Exciting news for all Apex BrailleNote users, a free update is available! The KeySoft 9.4 update can be downloaded for the Apex BrailleNote and will alleviate many of the frustrations when using Nemeth Code and PowerPoint. With the update you'll be able to input Nemeth Braille and subsequently create a translated print version. If a presenter uses PowerPoint (version 2007 or later) for their lecture, have them email you the PTTX file and follow along with the rest of the audience using your Apex BrailleNote.

## **SBVI All Staff Meeting and Training**

The SBVI all staff meeting and training is scheduled at the South Dakota Rehabilitation Center for the Blind August 7-9. Training topics will include functional low vision and pre-biopic training, Empowering Adults to Learn Technology and information on the South Dakota Diabetes Coalition. Training will also be provided on iPhone and iPad apps that can be demonstrated to clients. Orientation and mobility (O&M) training on rural techniques and new devices will be taught by the SDRC O&M Specialists. DakotaLink and SDRC staff will demonstrate some exciting new assistive technology. We're looking forward to using Person Centered Thinking (PCT) tools to address issues identified by SBVI staff with the leadership of Lori Kwasniewski and Heather Prince, SBVI PCT Coaches.

## **SDRC Transition Week**

"Step into the Future," was the theme for the 2017 Transition Week hosted at the SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind in Sioux Falls, June 11-15. The week emphasized post-secondary career goals, self-advocacy, and independence. Seven girls and four boys between the ages of 15 to 18 attended. The students were from across South Dakota. They learned and practiced independent living skills and were introduced to resources and services beneficial to their future. The SD Department of Labor presented a workshop about workforce training. Twelve Sioux Falls businesses talked to the students and let them tour their businesses so they could learn about options for future employment opportunities.

Kids want to have fun and learn new things at summer camp, so evening activities were planned for the week. Activities included swimming at Wild Water West waterpark, a round-robin adaptive Bocce Ball tournament, and a movie and pizza night. The week wrapped up with a "Resources of the Future" breakfast, where both students and parents could hear information and get their questions answered. Representatives included rehabilitation counselors from Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, representatives from SD Department of Labor, Independent Living Choices, SD Parent Connection, and Brenda Smith speaking on Person Centered Transition Assessments. Transition Week supports students to gain knowledge, make new friends, experience college dorm life, and explore career opportunities. We had a wonderful group of kids this year, and we're already looking forward to new friendships and fun next summer.

## **Assistive Technology Training for South Dakotans with Vision Loss**

The Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired is offering free training to South Dakota citizens with vision loss to assist with access to their mobile devices and personal computers. The Assistive Technology Access Project (ATAP) provides training to access built in accessibility options for those with low vision or who are blind through a partnership between SBVI and DakotaLink. Keep in mind, this program focuses on training and does not purchase any devices, applications or software. Many people have become more independent in the use of their device or personal computer due to the five hours of instruction provided by the program. For more information contact any Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired office.

## **CareerConnect®**

CareerConnect is an employment information resource developed by the American Foundation for the Blind for job seekers who are blind or visually impaired.

CareerConnect provides employment information, career exploration tools, and job seeking guidance for individuals with vision loss and professionals who work with them and provides free access to a variety of fully accessible employment and portfolio-building tools and exercises that will support you in your job search. The employment materials you develop through CareerConnect will be saved to your account. The exercises and interactive features are all friendly to screen readers and screen magnifiers developed for people who are blind or have low vision. To create an account, go to: <http://www.afb.org/careerconnect/registration.aspx>

Once registered, you can:

- [Take Advantage of the Job Seeker's Toolkit](#)
- [Learn About "Maintaining Employment and Advancing Your Career"](#)
- [Create an Online Resume Through the Fully Accessible Resume Builder](#)
- [Build a Personal Data Sheet to Help Fill Out Job Applications](#)
- [Ask Questions and Seek Advice on Career-Specific Message Boards](#)

## **Free Devices for People with Hearing and Vision Loss**

iCanConnect provides people with both significant vision and hearing loss with free equipment and training. iCanConnect is a national program with local contacts that helps people stay connected with friends, family and the world.

Sending an email or chatting on the phone can be challenging for people with both significant vision and hearing loss. iCanConnect provides free equipment including smartphones, tablets, computers, screen readers, braille displays, and more to people who meet federal disability and income guidelines. Each person receives an individual assessment to determine the best equipment solutions. iCanConnect serves people from a wide range of backgrounds, including older people who have lost vision and hearing later in life.

iCanConnect, also known as the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP), was established by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). For more information about iCanConnect, including links to the FCC's consumer guide and program rules, go to [www.fcc.gov/NDBEDP](http://www.fcc.gov/NDBEDP). Contact any SBVI office to access the South Dakota program.

## **Announcements**

SBVI All Staff Meeting & Training - Sioux Falls - August 7, 8, & 9  
Medication Safety Awareness for the Blind Week – September 9-15  
Statewide Independent Living Council – Pierre - September 19  
Transition Forum – Eagle Butte - September 20  
DakotaLink Advisory Council – Pierre - September 21  
Board of SBVI Quarterly Meeting – Pierre - September 22  
National Disability Awareness Month, Statewide events - October  
Fall Conference – Pierre - October 2, 3 & 4  
White Cane Awareness Walk – Sioux Falls – October 14  
First Friday's, Rehabilitation Center for the Blind – Morning Walk-In Assistive  
Technology Q&A; Afternoon Classes – Topics to be Determined

To request alternative formats or for other information contact us at:  
1-800-265-9684 (toll free) or (605) 773-4644

Visit our web site at: <http://dhs.sd.gov/service-to-the-blind/default.aspx>